

SUSPICIOUS FIRE AT RIVERSIDE BOWL



HEATHER ACHESON/POST-RECORD

The interior of the building that once housed Riverside Bowl was heavily damaged by fire early Monday morning. The structure has been vacant since the fall of 2007. Vandalism has been an issue at the site, and fire investigators suspect that the fire may have been started accidentally by transients.

Bowling alley damaged by blaze

□ No injuries reported

By Heather Acheson
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A two-alarm fire damaged part of the abandoned Riverside Bowl building in Camas early Monday morning.

At approximately 2:48 a.m., emergency crews were dispatched to the structure located at the intersection of Northeast Third Avenue and North Shepherd Road.

According to Vancouver Fire Capt. Kevin Murray, the call originally came in as a reported grass fire. Upon arrival,

firefighters found heavy smoke coming from the structure, and fire coming from underneath the building.

"Camas Fire did a great job," he said. "They quickly saw how much fire they had and called a second alarm." Through a mutual-aid agreement, this action triggered emergency crews from the Washougal Fire Department, East County Fire and Rescue and the Vancouver Fire Department to join in the firefighting effort.

Murray said the fire appears to have started near a side entrance, where a restaurant had been located.

The interior attic portion of the building

received significant damage. The structure's thick cement wall kept the fire from spreading to the heavily wooded Washougal River Greenway area located behind the building. Just one tree was scorched by fire.

Firefighters conducted a sweep of the building and found no one inside. No injuries were reported.

The fire was under control by 4:55 a.m., and crews were leaving the scene by 6:45 a.m.

The building, located adjacent to a city-owned skateboard park, has been vacant

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since Riverside Bowl closed in the fall of 2007. It has been plagued by vandalism.

This morning, Camas Deputy Fire Marshal Randy Miller said evidence found at the scene, including clothing and other items, indicates that a warming fire started by a transient may have gotten out of control and ignited the blaze. He said over the past several years there have been many reports of transients building campfires along the Washougal River and nearby train tracks.

According to Clark County records, Marwan and Jacqueline Bahu of Camas purchased the Riverside Bowl building and property in December 2007. It was originally built in the 1940s as a roller skating rink. The site has also been home to what was known as Wagon Wheel Park and a dance hall.

"That might be the beginning of the end for the building," Murray said of the fire. "It's sad to see these old buildings go."

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